Home Affairs

House of Commons Written Answer

Schools: Religious Freedom

Jim Shannon (DUP) [186797] To ask the Secretary of State for Education, what steps she is taking to help promote awareness of freedom of religion and belief in schools.

Nick Gibb: Education is a devolved matter, and the response outlines the information for England only.

All schools in England must offer a curriculum that is balanced and broad and that promotes the spiritual, moral, cultural, mental, and physical development of pupils. Pupils should be taught about different societies and how different groups have contributed to the development of Britain. This can include the experiences and voices of people from all backgrounds. The curriculum offers many opportunities for schools to do this, notably through citizenship education and relationships, sex and health education.

Within the citizenship curriculum, pupils should be taught about the diverse national, regional, religious and ethnic identities in the United Kingdom, and the need for mutual respect and understanding.

In delivering the curriculum, schools should be aware of their duties relating to political impartiality as set out under the Education Act 1996. Schools must ensure that, where political issues are discussed in the classroom, they are presented in a balanced way.

Schools also have a duty to promote the fundamental British values, including the mutual respect and tolerance of those with different faiths and beliefs. Developing and deepening pupils’ understanding of these values is part of the Ofsted inspection framework, alongside expectations that schools develop responsible and active citizens and promote an inclusive environment that meets the needs of all pupils, irrespective of their characteristics.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-24/186797
Pre-legislative scrutiny of the Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

Q2 Figen Murray [Campaigner for Martyn’s Law and mother of Martyn Hett (one of the victims of the Manchester Arena attack)]: … Every single family that has been affected by terrorism in that way is a changed family. … I always see Martyn’s law as very no-nonsense, common-sense legislation … People have the right to be secure when they are out and about. We live in a democratic country, and people ought to be able to safely enjoy the freedom that this country offers. Unfortunately, terrorists have changed the way they operate. They no longer ring in advance and warn people; they just get radicalised in their bedroom, go out and kill people by any means, and it can be simple. …

Q3 Figen Murray: Martyn’s law isn’t going to stop all attacks, but I realised during the inquiry how quickly somebody can, for instance, bleed to death … If something does happen, any security, for instance, who are in a building will, by default of being there, become first responders. So I would really like to see a mandatory life-saving training element in the standard tier.

But I also feel that there are issues … The way the legislation is looked at at the moment can create loopholes for people to try to avoid coming under it. …

Q4 Nick Aldworth [Director, Risk to Resolution Ltd.]: … the nature of terrorism across the world has changed from being organised through a central brain to being delivered through self-radicalisation. Effectively, terrorists have mobilised their own society. What this law does is mobilise our society to respond to that threat … We believe that the law could be improved by finding a mechanism through which some events can be included. Currently, ostensibly outdoor, unboundaried events through which members of the public can pass without payment or ticketing will not be covered by the legislation. … Christmas markets jump to my mind. … we have seen those sorts of events being attacked around the world. When we reflect on 2017, almost all those events took place in public spaces that would probably not be protected by the Bill. …

Q5 Chair (Diana Johnson, Labour): … What would you say to the idea that provision already exists, say for Christmas markets? … What would you say about the fact that there are already security arrangements and engagement with local authorities that would deal with some of the things that are going to be in Martyn’s law, hopefully, so you do not need to put it into Martyn’s law?

Nick Aldworth: I would say that they are discretionary, and that the application and care given up and down the country is really inconsistent. … the Licensing Act and the sports safety advisory groups—none of those are required by law to apply conditions around counter-terrorism or even consider counter-terrorism. There is a statutory obligation that local resilience forums exist, but no statutory obligation about the things they must consider.

… when you look at risk assessments on local authority websites, you commonly find the risks of fire, flood and famine … but I rarely see the risk of terrorism even considered. …

Q6 Tim Loughton (Conservative): … We had a session with Home Office officials earlier, and I raised the example of village halls, which are normally run on a voluntary basis by trustees. They have not been the subject of terrorist attacks in the past; they could be in the future, but they are a low level of risk. This legislation could have an impact on the viability of some of those sorts of venues, which by and large are not commercial. Do you think more exceptions could be made without undermining what you are trying to achieve? …

Figen Murray: … given the way terrorism has changed, the general public needs to have a more raised awareness about it. The training is available free of charge. Any adult in the UK can download the app or go on the website. Volunteers at big village fêtes can do the
training as a minimum thing that will benefit them, not just in looking after the event but on a personal level—it will keep themselves and their families safe. …

On proportionality, Martyn’s law … is not meant to be punitive. … It is often about common-sense measures. Do the free-of-charge training, and maybe let staff know. If something does happen, do you know where to evacuate or invacuate? Do you know where you keep yourself and your customers safe? I do not think it is unreasonable to ask people to do those minimum things. …

Q7 Nick Aldworth: … scale and proportionality lies at the heart of what we have sought to achieve. … Those places are already bound by the health and safety Act, and are already required to undertake very similar measures to those that we are asking them to undertake under Martyn’s law, to the extent that I think those two things will sometimes become almost merged as one. …

My experience … was that most of these attacks are not taking place in big venues. The victims of terrorism whom I have met were all caught up in little shops or little restaurants … The first victim of terrorism I ever met was a young woman who had been dining in Borough market on 3 June 2017. She came to me and said, “My experience would have been so much better if that place had had a plan. As it was, I was trapped in this restaurant, panicked. There were glass windows, so I could see everything going on.” She could see people outside being stabbed to death. She said, “I had no idea whether that person was going to come through the door and kill me.” …

Q8 Tim Loughton: … To take the example of the non-boundaried events, I can understand why it becomes hugely problematic if they are to be included in the legislation. We are looking at open markets. They have been the subject of terrorist attacks … It is entirely credible that they should be in scope here, and they are commercial ventures. There is a responsible body that organises them, and presumably had to organise all the road closures and everything else to go with them, so I can see why they could be covered without too much additional work.

However, if I make a speech on an open piece of ground in my constituency and over 100 people turn up … or when I go on May Day to watch the local morris dancers do their rather odd stuff, and quite a lot of people turn up, there is no commercial element to that, and there is no control over how many people turn up. Nobody is making any money out of that. If those events were covered, then the responsible person—be it me or the chief bladder-hitter, or whatever you call the head of the morris dancers, might not do that any more, because the liability becomes too big for something that you cannot control at all. …

Nick Aldworth: … it might make you think about whether having them dancing in the middle of the road is preferable to having them dancing on the playing field just behind the pub. … When we do a comparison with the health and safety Act, the standard to which that law is applied is as low as is “reasonably practicable”. If it is not practicable to do something, then the law is on your side; you don’t have to do it. …

I revert back to the issue of what proportionality looks like. … In your example, Sir, what we wouldn’t want is the regulator coming up and saying, “Mr Loughton, you had far too many people there, and you didn’t put any protective security measures in.” They would come along and say, “You are a not-for-profit, and you don’t have any budget for this. It’s an important constitutional matter that you speak to these people. What you did was move everybody a little bit further away from the road, so well done—that’s a proportionate act for you to undertake.” That is how this should work. …

Q12 Marco Longhi (Conservative): … I am picking up on your point, Mr Aldworth, about the woman who said, “If there had been a plan, I’d have felt better.” The very nature of terrorism is that it can be so varied, so it is almost impossible to visualise how you could cater for every possible thing that could happen. I am just wondering, in a practical way, how something like this could make a positive contribution to the safety of people if someone determined to create mayhem either sets off a bomb outside, or comes inside,
pretends to be a customer and starts stabbing people or sets off a bomb there. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this proposal for that type of scenario? …

Nick Aldworth: Government advice to individuals in the event of a terrorist attack is run, hide and tell. A plan is as simple as: guide, shelter, communicate. If you have 100 people in your restaurant, each trying to “run, hide, tell”, I promise you, having seen that happen for real, that the consequences will be worse than having somebody stand in the middle and say, “Stop! That is the way out—go that way,” or “I’m locking the doors. Get down behind the counter,” or, “Don’t worry, I’m on the phone to the police now.” That is the simplicity of a plan, but my experience, and the experience of the victims I have spoken to, is that that does not happen.

Q16 Cllr Clive Woodbridge [Deputy Chair of the Safer and Stronger Communities Board]: … In principle, the LGA broadly supports the Government’s approach to considering how we might prevent attacks and protect our citizens. It also supports the principle of proportionality, which is embedded in the legislation. It is clear that the legislation will have a number of significant implications for councils, and they will be affected in different ways.

Q17 Neil Sharpley [Policy Chair, Federation of Small Businesses, Local Government Association and Mayor of Epsom and Ewell Borough Council]: … It is difficult to imagine how physical measures alone can ever prevent any atrocity in the future, but what is key—and this is the same with cyber-crime and cyber-fraud—is the human element, awareness of the human element and the training of the human element involved. That is, I think, where the focus of the legislation should be, rather than on requiring businesses to spend large amounts of money implementing physical barriers, which may or may not be effective.

One of our concerns is that there are many open areas in the centre of towns where individual businesses are too small to fall within the scope of the Bill, but the aggregation of a number of small businesses in an area, especially where there is café culture, will bring numbers of people on to a high street or into an open area where there is little control. One of the concerns is that the control lies with the local authorities and that there needs to be some sort of consideration of what risks exist in those circumstances, which at present fall outside the Bill.

Having said that, we are concerned about the administrative impact of the burden that will be imposed on smaller businesses, and we are concerned about the costs.

Q19 Tim Loughton: … Do you think there should be more exemptions to venues that are, by and large, community venues run on a voluntary charity basis, not for explicit commercial gain, which could be subject to proportionately quite high additional requirements and liabilities on volunteers and maybe trustees of village halls or whatever? Could they be separated out without undermining the thrust of what the Bill is trying to achieve?

Cllr Woodbridge: There is no doubt that we are concerned about the impact of the legislation on the community and on voluntary and faith sectors, which run facilities and organise events in our community that are hugely valued and valuable.

One of the issues that we would like to raise is about capacity. First of all, how are you determining capacity? If you have your village hall, if you set the seats out in a certain way, you might be able to get 200 people in there, but the reality is perhaps it never hosts more than 50, so should it come within the scope of the legislation or not? … Also, is capacity a rather blunt instrument in terms of determining what is at risk and what is not at risk? You could have a very small facility, perhaps a venue that hosts particular groups that might attract controversy, and that might be more at risk than a larger one.

Q21 Cllr Woodbridge: … It would be a win for terrorism if a lot of those events that are at the centre of our lives, and are part of our communities and have been for many years, were to be wound down because of this legislation.
Q22 Neil Sharpley: … the first step that we are taking at the lower level of the standard duty area is too great a step. I entirely agree that village halls, community halls and places of worship are all used for different functions within the community and are run by small community groups and charities. You will definitely find that some of the volunteers, who are already put off by some of the measures they have to consider, will be deterred if an additional burden is placed on them in relation to terrorism. I think the solution is simple. The first step should not be to take the threshold down to 100. If you set the threshold at 200, you would exclude almost all of those small charitable and community events. …

Q35 Chair: … Mark, do you want to start? We are obviously very interested in your perspective, providing security in synagogues and other places.

Mark Gardner [Chief Executive, Community Security Trust]: I think the Bill overall is a good thing. It is correctly motivated for the worst of reasons, if I may put it like that. I think society needs to better understand that we’re all at risk of terrorism. In today’s statutory environment, it strikes me as correct that there will be an obligation to plan around risk, and to attempt to mitigate against risk. I am broadly in favour of it. Community security, for me, should be at the heart of this, though. This is the ethos of the Community Security Trust, the organisation that I represent and the work that we have also tried to do with other faith communities and other people of protected characteristics through a sub-programme called SAFE, which stands for “security advice for everyone”. The basic principle for this is that if I am a volunteer attending a synagogue, mosque, Hindu temple or church week in, week out, or if I work at that building because I am the rabbi or the imam, then actually I know better than a commercial security guard, and I even know better than a police officer, who does and does not look out of place in and around those premises. I also better understand the premises themselves and the immediate environment, so I should be better placed to identify somebody who may be carrying out hostile reconnaissance. I should be better placed to know where you might invacuate, where you might hide, where you might evacuate, how you might shut the door, how you might barricade the door, who you might report to if you see suspicious activity outside the premises. That is really what community security, which depends on community awareness and community intelligence, is all about: providing a mechanism whereby people can understand what I would consider to be the basics of being aware but not alarmed, and of being alert and supported but not punished.

Last year, for example, we had 235 reports from across the country of what people deemed to be suspicious activities in and around Jewish communities. In the detail of those, 140 were cases of people taking photos or video footage of synagogues, Jewish schools and so on when they did not seem to have any good cause to do so, and 57 attempts to enter a Jewish premises, again when people did not really seem to have good cause to do so. Obviously, we forward that information to the relevant local and specialist police forces. That is the first layer of security—just being aware of what is going on around you, what might constitute planning and hostile reconnaissance in advance of, God forbid, a terrorist attack, and knowing what to do about it. If, God forbid, something did occur, as I say, how do we shut the front door? Where do we run to, either in or out? Who do we tell? These are the basics, and I think it is not unreasonable for places of worship to at least have a written plan stating where those things are, and for the people who use the premises most regularly to be aware of it and to know how they might respond if, God forbid, the worst happens.

Q36 Chair: Given the way the Bill is drafted, do you think that it is proportionate? Do you think it deals with the points that you have just made?

Mark Gardner: Unfortunately, any legislation is going to have to set arbitrary levels. I understand why it says 100 and 800, but the threat does not depend on the size of the
premises. The threat depends partly on the nature of the premises, but also on who is entering the premises. Take for example the tragic murder of Jo Cox MP: the attack occurred outside a library, but the threat to the library every day of the week was not the same as the threat on the day that Jo Cox was going to hold a constituency meeting there … The murder of David Amess occurred in a Methodist hall, but it was not an attack against the Methodist hall; it was an attack against him.

The threat is fluid, depending on what the premises are being used for, but it is very difficult to expect members of the public, even if they have some responsibility at a place of worship, to understand when the threat to their premises may alter to such an extent that a terrorist plan needs to be put in place. …

**Mike Kill [Chief Executive Officer, Night Time Industries Association]:** … We foresee some big issues with regard to the language that is used in the Bill, particularly as we suffer quite heavily under the licensing regime, where there is ambiguity in some of the wording and language used. That has a risk of discrepancy in terms of implementation, and also has a contested position between operator and regulator. …

Q37 **Mike Kill:** … when you look at “reasonably practicable”, what does reasonable mean? Or what does “vicinity” mean? … is that one mile up the road? Is that within a local area? We need to have some specifics …

There are two examples that would present challenges in this Bill to moving forward. It needs clear understanding of the protection of public and private space, and where the responsibility sits between the state and the policing mechanism and the ownership of a space, whether there is an integrated, proportionate partnership between the two, which already exists in many respects. …

Q39 **Tim Loughton:** … Will you both comment on something that came out earlier—on the differentiation between the commercial sector and commercial venues, which already have to go through all sorts of regulatory hoops, and the voluntary sector or what I call village hall scenarios, which are mostly run by volunteers for a range of fairly low key but important events? Should there be more exemptions for those village hall activities …?

**Mark Gardner:** No, that is not a problem. I am the chief executive of a charity that employs nearly 100 people and has 2,000 active volunteers who carry out counter-terrorism and security duties at synagogues and Jewish events across the UK. We are a registered charity and there is no shortage of governance and legal demands, and so on. I presume that most premises to which you refer are charities of one sort or another, and they probably already have quite an onerous burden in terms of the performance of staff and volunteers and the oversight duties of trustees. I do not honestly feel that this need be a huge burden in addition to the burden they already carry legislatively.

It is a bit like health and safety. When you look at health and safety, it can appear overwhelming. You could take the attitude of, “Yeah, I know I’m supposed to do that, but who’s going to bother?” But if you do carry it out, you end up with a better, safer place of work for staff and volunteers alike…

I think the provision should be there to encourage and enable local venues—church halls, village halls and so on—to have a much closer relationship with the relevant local police and local council, the protect duty and all the apparatus that is already in place for counter-terrorism. It should be used as an opportunity to make those links that much better, but it should not just become an excuse for insurance companies to charge ridiculous premiums, or for somebody to try to pass on their legal responsibility to the volunteer who was unlucky enough to be on the church door that day and let the terrorist in.

Q40 **Tim Loughton:** … do you envisage that groups would have to make changes to the structure of a building—to provide a safe room, for example? In order for the horticultural show to be able to meet there, is it really necessary that there is a safe room in the event of a terrorist attack? …

**Mark Gardner:** It depends who is visiting the horticultural show. …
**Q41 Tim Loughton:** … anybody who might be visiting a horticultural show might have a higher risk profile, and that means that every horticultural show meeting would have to provide a safe room and every village hall with any activities that meant there was a chance of a local or higher profile figure coming along would have to bring in those additional requirements, which might not be commercially viable and might mean that they had to close down. …

**Mark Gardner:** I am here to talk about places of worship, first of all. Secondly, I don’t think the Bill does say any of that. What the Bill does say is that, for places of worship, unless you charge an entry fee and have a capacity of over 800, basically you will be treated at the minimum level, as it were, as a place with a capacity for 100 people and therefore you will need to have a plan and somebody designated as being responsible for that plan. … There is a world of difference between that and building safe rooms in case an MP with a high threat profile should decide to visit a horticultural society fair.

**Q42 Tim Loughton:** … there are roughly 40,000 places of worship in the UK, of which 16,000 are Anglican churches. I cannot think of any attacks on them, but synagogues and mosques, of course, have, regrettably, been the subject of attacks. You cannot really have a policy that says that synagogues and mosques must by law have these but the village church is exempt, so effectively all 40,000 of those places of worship are going to be covered. …

**Mark Gardner:** … In the early 2000s, two synagogues in Istanbul were attacked by al-Qaeda car bombs, and the vast majority of casualties were caused by flying glass. For a number of years after that, my own charity was Britain’s biggest single purchaser of protective film for glass windows. Why was that? It was because we went to Istanbul, saw what had happened and learned the lessons. We decided that there was a big enough security risk to Jewish communities here in the UK that we would invest in putting film across every single outward-facing window. Then, when we were doing that process, we had it explained to us that if the window won’t shatter, the glass itself travels as a projectile, so we then had to reinforce the window frames of a number of external-facing windows. We do that because we perceive a certain level of risk to synagogues and other Jewish communal sites, and we believe that it is worth that investment. Similarly, when we build new schools, we do our utmost to build them as far away from the public highway as possible. My own organisation is involved at the architectural stage of the planning of new Jewish schools, and that is because in 1994 Hezbollah drove a truck bomb up against the Jewish community centre in Buenos Aires and murdered 84 people. We are all at equal risk of terrorist attack when we get on the tube or go to a concert, but when a religious minority is singled out for a terrorist attack, the impact that that has on that minority’s sense not just of safety and security but of their future and belonging in a country can be very dramatic indeed. That is why we feel the need to do this; it is proportionate, we feel, for us, but I am not going to sit here and tell churches that they need to do it.

**Q43 Tim Loughton:** … you chose to do it without any legislation. Why does it now require legislation to make you and others carry on that good practice?

**Mark Gardner:** We do not need the legislation within the Jewish community; we do it because the Jewish community wants to protect itself. But the legislation as proposed—as I understand it, anyway—is not that onerous. Literally, it is a case of, “Here’s a plan of our building. Here is our awareness of the security threat to it.” And you should work with the local council, the local police and the whole counter-terrorism apparatus to have something adequate in place that just enables the people who work at the building to know what they should do, to know who to shout to if they see something suspicious, to know how to close the front door, to know where to evacuate to and to know how to evacuate. … I think that you are making more out of the legislation than currently exists. …

**Q45 Tim Loughton:** No. … We don’t know exactly the scope and the powers of the
regulator, so conceivably, if, for good practice and entirely understandably, synagogues
and maybe mosques, following suit, are putting film over windows and things like that—
there are a lot of stained-glass windows in churches as well. Why shouldn’t the regulator
say, “Everyone now has to put film over windows”? That then becomes problematic. …
Mr Kill … Do you have a problem with non-commercial premises being treated with a much
softer touch or given far greater exemptions, notwithstanding some real risks?
Mike Kill: … it all draws back to the proportionality principle. Whatever size the event is or
the site is, there will always be a fire risk assessment or a means of escape, so what we
are talking about is something that, in terms of processes and procedures, as highlighted
by my colleague, is already in situ. …
Q48 Paula Barker: … Sometimes there are rogue employers, for example, or rogue
organisations that would say "... It was all the fault of the volunteer." … Obviously, the CST
is a very experienced organisation and works very effectively. Do you see any challenges
in terms of volunteers to other faith organisations that they may not have thought of, where
the CST could perhaps provide advice, guidance and support?
Mark Gardner: Absolutely. It comes back to the previous questions about the level of
threat that we perceive as a Jewish community. For those reasons, we do X, Y and Z. As
a church, a Hindu temple, a mosque or a Sikh gurdwara, you have to decide what you
believe the level of threat is to you. We would advise you to discuss it locally with police
and the local council. Get a handle on that. Understand a little when that risk may increase
depending on circumstance or depending upon visitors to your premises.
We use a quote at the very beginning of the talks that we give, where people come together
from across all different faiths while we give the Jewish experience. In one of our first ever
sessions, a vicar pointed out, “Hold on a minute. My church has an ethos and a religious
instruction to welcome the stranger.” Then he said—this is literally what we quote—“I get
it. What we need to do is welcome the stranger but make sure that they’re not there to
harm us.” I think the Bill provides another sentence to that: “If the stranger is there to harm
us, then we need to know what to do.” That is all this is. …
Volunteers are absolutely critical to running places of worship. It does not matter what
religion, or how big or small the premises are. They are absolutely central to it. … it comes
back to the spirit in which the law is applied. Is this supposed to be punitive or is this
supposed to be supportive? I think it has to be supportive in its spirit and application, and
if it can be somehow made supportive in its wording, that should occur also. …
To read the full transcript see
https://committees.parliament.uk/oralevidence/13248/html/

Scottish Parliament Oral Answers

Legal Minimum Age of Marriage (UNCRC)
Claire Baker (Labour) [S6F-02208]: To ask the First Minister what the Scottish
Government’s response is to the position set out by the United Nations Committee on
the Rights of the Child, in its concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh
reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland regarding the legal
minimum age of marriage in Scotland.
The First Minister (Humza Yousaf): We recognise and pay close attention to the
comments that have been made by the UN committee, as well as recognising that
young people in Scotland acquire a number of important rights at the age of 16. All
marriages and civil partnerships must be entered into with the full consent of both
parties, and there is existing legislative provision against forced marriage. We
hope that, with the Parliament’s approval, protections will also fully extend to forced
civil partnerships later this year.
We would want to balance any concerns that 16 and 17-year-olds may need more protection in relation to marriage with concerns that are related to the removal of the current rights that they have. I know that Claire Baker is aware of that balance. We are gathering views from stakeholders on the minimum age of marriage and are actively considering our next steps in that area. The UN’s comments will be taken into account as part of that process.

Claire Baker: The UN’s observations make it clear that the prohibition of marriage for children under the age of 18 is part of ensuring that 16 and 17-year-olds receive protection as children in practice. It strongly recommends that the Scottish Government prohibit all marriages for those under the age of 18, without exception. I recently met Scottish Women’s Aid on this. The Scottish Government has previously stated that there would have to be a full public consultation before taking any steps to raise the minimum age for marriage, either through legislation or by supporting it. I urge the First Minister to bring that consultation forward so that we can have a public discussion about the appropriate age of marriage and can take the UN’s recommendation into serious consideration.

The First Minister: A consultation and discussion is under way, and I welcome Claire Baker’s comments on that. Rightly, it is often the case in this Parliament that, when considering matters such as this, we are pressed to talk to the people who are the most directly affected and impacted by them. We are making sure that we are talking to children and young people, such as members of the Scottish Youth Parliament as well as many others, to gather their views. As I have said, I would welcome Claire Baker’s thoughts on the issue in more detail.

We know that only around 0.1 per cent of marriages involve young people who are 16 and 17 years old. Records from the National Records of Scotland show that fewer than 30 people who were aged 16 and 17 entered into a registered marriage in 2019, which was pre-pandemic, and that there were fewer than that during the years of the pandemic. Nonetheless, I recognise the issues that have been raised by a number of stakeholders regarding concerns about forced marriage. We are undertaking the consultation, and, if we believe that there is a requirement to change the law, there will be a full public consultation on the issue. In the meantime, I would be more than happy to hear from Claire Baker with her thoughts.


Holocaust

House of Commons Written Answers

The following three questions all received the same answer

Imperial War Museum

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [186807] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, whether he has visited the Imperial War Museum (IWM) Holocaust Galleries; and whether he has been briefed on the IWM Learning Programmes.

National Holocaust Memorial Centre and Learning Service

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [186808] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, if he will make an estimate of the (a) duration and (b) cost of holding a competition for designing a Holocaust memorial in (i) Parliament Square, (ii) Abingdon Gardens and (iii) at the north end of Victoria Tower Gardens that would be opened within two years.

Peter Bottomley (Conservative) [186809] To ask the Secretary of State for Levelling Up,
Housing and Communities, how much has been (a) spent and (b) committed by (i) the Government and (ii) Government agencies to the proposal for a National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre.

**Felicity Buchan:** The Minister with responsibility for the Holocaust Memorial, Baroness Scott of Bybrook, has visited the Holocaust Galleries and been briefed about the Imperial War Museum's work.

The Government has spent £17.8 million on the Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. Details of any future spend will be set out in the usual way.

https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-25/186807
and
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-25/186808
and
https://questions-statements.parliament.uk/written-questions/detail/2023-05-25/186809

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**Israel**

**UK Parliament Ministerial Statement**

**Trade Negotiations with Israel, Mexico and Switzerland**

The Minister of State, Department for Business and Trade (Nigel Huddleston) [HCWS833] … UK-Israel trade negotiations

The second round of United Kingdom-Israel free trade agreement negotiations commenced on 9 May, concluding on 17 May. This round of negotiations was hosted by the UK and conducted in a hybrid manner; a group of Israeli officials travelled to London for in-person discussions, with further officials attending virtually.

Prior to the round, the Secretary of State visited Israel to meet her counterpart, Minister Nir Barkat, to discuss the negotiations and the wider UK-Israel trade and business relationship.

During this round policy officials held text-based discussions, having exchanged draft chapter texts in advance of the round. Technical discussions were held across 30 policy areas and 60 sessions in London. Negotiations covered the breadth of the upgraded agreement.

The ongoing negotiations for a new modern free trade agreement putting services and innovation at its heart will upgrade our trade relationship, worth £7.2 billion in the four quarters to the end of 2022, supporting new opportunities for our businesses. …

**Summary**

The Government remain clear that any deal we sign, including with Israel, Switzerland and Mexico, will be in the best interests of the British people and the United Kingdom economy. We will not compromise on our high environmental and labour protections, public health, animal welfare and food standards, and we will maintain our right to regulate in the public interest. We are also clear that during these negotiations, the NHS, and the services it provides is not on the table.

His Majesty's Government will continue to work closely with Israel, Mexico, and Switzerland to ensure negotiations proceed at pace and takes place on terms that are right for the UK.

*To read the full statement see*
https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2023-06-08/debates/23060842000009/TradeNegotiationsWithIsraelMexicoAndSwitzerland
Strategic Partnership between United Nations, Arab League Vital for Transformation of Region, Senior Official Tells Security Council

… Rosemary DiCarlo, United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, [said] … The deteriorating situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory … witnessed yet another escalation in Gaza in May with the tragic loss of life on both sides and further damage to fragile infrastructure. Tensions also continue to simmer and regularly boil over in the occupied West Bank. Moreover, unilateral actions continue to undermine collective efforts to realize a two-State solution. The financial and institutional challenges facing the Palestinian Authority must be addressed as must the lack of progress on advancing intra-Palestinian unity and the holding of general elections. Echoing the Secretary-General’s call to ensure full funding for the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), she emphasized that the World Food Programme (WFP) also needs immediate financial support. The Organization shares a common goal with LAS — the two-State solution, she said, underscoring that this is the only path to sustainable peace. …

Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the League of Arab States … noted that Palestinians in occupied territories are suffering from persistent occupation and heightened violence by Israel, he said that country’s Government is motivated not by peace but by the desire to appease the extreme right demographic in that country. Pointing to the increasing despair among Palestinians, he called for renewed support to the two-State solution. …

Pascale Christine Baeriswyl (Switzerland), noting that prevention, mediation and building lasting peace require the inclusion of regional communities … called for dialogue geared towards a two-State solution to enable the parties to break out of the spiral of violence. Such a solution would also constitute a central element of regional security. The League, which has emerged in the context of this conflict, has an important role to play in this respect, for example through the Arab Peace Initiative. However, it is up to all the influential players to commit to a solution that takes account of the aspirations of young people in particular. …

Vassily A. Nebenzia (Russian Federation) … stressed the need to break the impasse around the region’s central issue — the Palestinian-Israeli settlement. The challenging socioeconomic situation in numerous Arab States intensifies radical sentiments and contributes to manifestations of extremism and terrorism. …


UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

The rights of civil society members are being violated by all entities in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory, UN Commission of Inquiry says; Israeli Government restrictions intrinsically linked to occupation

The rights of civil society members in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory are being violated by authorities in all areas through harassment, threats, arrests, interrogations, arbitrary detention, torture and inhuman and degrading treatment, according to a report to the Human Rights Council issued today by the UN Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel.

The report examined attacks, restrictions and harassment of civil society actors in Israel, and the Occupied Palestinian Territory including East Jerusalem. It found that the majority of violations are being committed by Israeli authorities as part of the Israeli Government’s
goal of ensuring and enshrining its permanent occupation at the expense of the rights of the Palestinian people.
The report found that the Israeli Government has increasingly restricted civic space through a strategy of delegitimizing and silencing civil society. This includes criminalizing Palestinian civil society organizations and their members by labelling them as “terrorists,” pressuring and threatening institutions that give a platform for civil society discourse, actively lobbying donors, and implementing measures intended to cut sources of funding and support.
This strategy is being implemented in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territory against Israeli and Palestinian civil society organizations and activists, and internationally against international advocates of Palestinian rights.
The report determined that the designations by Israeli authorities of six Palestinian NGOs as “terrorist” organizations and a seventh Palestinian NGO as unlawful were unjustified and violated fundamental human rights, including the rights to freedom of association, expression, opinion, peaceful assembly, privacy and the right to a fair trial. Palestinian authorities in both the occupied West Bank and in Gaza were also found to be targeting Palestinian human rights defenders and civil society activists with the aim of silencing dissenting opinions. The arrest and detention of Palestinian activists by both Israeli and Palestinian authorities was noted as a particularly harsh reality for many Palestinian activists. …
The Commission conducted more than 127 interviews with victims and witnesses, experts and others for the report … Its call for submissions issued on 2 November 2022 resulted in 21 submissions being received. …
The report found that Palestinian journalists are particularly targeted and subjected to frequent harassment and punitive measures, seemingly as part of an effort to deter them from continuing their work. Israeli journalists are also being monitored and harassed, and increasingly practise self-censorship out of fear of attacks and losing employment. Women human rights defenders face significant and distinct risks due to their visibility and role in fighting for societal and political change. They have been specifically targeted by Palestinian State actors and anti-gender rights groups because they are perceived as challenging religious and cultural norms and the status quo. …
Although the report focused primarily on actions undertaken by authorities, it also found that certain non-governmental organizations play key roles in silencing civil society in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and Israel and pressuring those advocating for Palestinian rights around the world. Right-wing organizations operating in Israel and abroad effectively implement and promote the Israeli Government’s strategy against civil society. Palestinian anti-gender rights groups operating in the occupied West Bank, have targeted Palestinian women human rights defenders. Both Israeli and Palestinian authorities allow, and in some cases encourage and support, the actions of non-governmental organizations targeting civil society actors.
The report found reasonable grounds to conclude that several Israeli actions undertaken against civil society organizations amount to violations of international human rights and humanitarian law and may constitute crimes under international law. These include the arbitrary detention of civil society organization members and their forcible transfer from the Occupied Palestinian Territory to Israel, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the revocation of East Jerusalem residency permits and the deportation of a human rights defender from East Jerusalem.
“We have no doubt that the revocation of Salah Hammouri’s East Jerusalem residency permit based on an alleged ‘breach of allegiance’ to the State of Israel constitutes a war crime,” said Commissioner Chris Sidoti. “Demanding allegiance from protected people in occupied territory is a reprehensible violation of international humanitarian law. We have preserved information about the individuals who bear responsibility for what may amount to the war crime of unlawful deportation, including third parties such as airlines and their
staff that assisted in the deportation.” …

The report also recommended that the Office of the Prosecutor of the International Criminal Court prioritize the investigation into the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including the identification of direct perpetrators, those exercising command responsibility and individuals who aid or abet the commission of crimes under the Court’s jurisdiction. …

To read the full press release see


Detailed findings on attacks and restrictions on and harassment of civil society actors, by all duty bearers (A/HRC/53/CRP.1)

** Relevant Legislation ** new or updated today

** UK Parliament **

Bill of Rights Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3227

Education (Non-religious Philosophical Convictions) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3186

** Holocaust Memorial Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3421

Submissions to the House of Commons Standing Orders Committee:

- London Historic Park and Gardens Trust
  https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51498/documents/3536
- Baroness Deech and Holocaust Survivors
  https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51499/documents/3537
- The Buxton Family and the Thomas Fowell Buxton Society
  https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51500/documents/3538
- The Thorney Island Society
  https://bills.parliament.uk/publications/51503/documents/3539

Marriage Act 1949 (Amendment) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3325

Online Safety Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3137
Nakba Commemoration Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3461

Palestine Statehood (Recognition) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3217

Private Burial Grounds and Cemeteries Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3188

Same Sex Marriage (Church of England)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3438

Schools Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3156

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill

Universal Credit (Removal of Two Child Limit) Bill
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3163

Universal Jurisdiction (Extension)
https://bills.parliament.uk/bills/3454

Scottish Parliament

Charities (Regulation and Administration) (Scotland) Bill

Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill

Consultations
** new or updated today

** closes in 3 days
The UK’s international counter-terrorism policy (closing date 12 June 2023)
https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3120/

** closes in 6 days
Supporting earlier resolution of private family law arrangements (closing date 15 June 2023)
**closes in 9 days**
Review of the Race Relations (NI) Order 1997 (closing date 18 June 2023)

Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Draft Bill (closing date 23 June 2023)
https://committees.parliament.uk/call-for-evidence/3146/

Charities tax compliance (closing date 20 July 2023)

JPR 2023 Antisemitism in the UK Survey (closing date not stated)
https://www.jpr.org.uk/panel/UKantisemitism2023 (UK except Scotland) and
https://bit.ly/3Vg7DDH (Scotland)